

# WARMINSTER URBAN COUNCIL.

## Annual Report of Medical Officer of Health.

Warminster, 7th February, 1901.

Mr. Chairman, gentlemen,—In presenting to you my annual report on the health and sanitary condition of the town, I am pleased to be able to congratulate you on a favourable death-rate, which is mainly attributable to the mild weather experienced during the latter part of the year, which caused the deaths to be much less than usual for that period of the year.

The deaths during the year numbered seventy-nine. From this number must be deducted nine deaths of persons not belonging to the town, which gives the actual number of deaths at seventy, equal to a death-rate of 12·5 per thousand, calculated on an estimated population of 5,560. My observations lead me to think that the population here mentioned will correspond closely with the actual number at the approaching census, and that there has been little or no diminution in the number of inhabitants during the last decade. One death occurred from measles, and four from phthisis. The ages at death ranged from ten minutes to ninety-seven years, and the deaths of persons over eighty years of age numbered twelve. Of the latter seven were inmates of the Workhouse, and, with one exception, belonged to the town.

The births numbered 131, equal to a birth-rate of 23·5 per thousand.

The highest number of deaths registered during the last decade has been 116, equal to a death-rate of 20·9 per thousand, and the lowest seventy-seven, equal to a death-rate of 13·9 per thousand. The average during the same period has been 101, equal to a death-rate of 18·1 per thousand.

The highest number of births during the same period was 182, equal to a rate of 32·7, and the lowest 124, equal to a rate of 22·3 per thousand. The average has been 148, equal to a birth-rate of 26·6 per thousand.

I will now allude to the presence of infectious disease during the year.

*Diphtheria*.—Four cases of this disease were notified to me, three of which were subjected to bacteriological examination, with the result that in two cases the diagnosis was confirmed. The unconfirmed case was undoubtedly a case of the disease, as not only was it the cause of infection in one of the other cases, but later on the patient suffered severely from diphtheritic paralysis, which left no doubt of the nature of the disease. I mention this to show that bacteriological examination is not always infallible, and it may happen that in not very pronounced cases the medical attendant may be put off his guard with disastrous results.

*Scarlet Fever*.—A few cases of a mild character were reported to me during the summer, but in no case could I detect any connection from one to the other. In November, however, a case occurred which was shortly followed by a number of others attending the Mission School, Warminster Common. The school was closed for a few weeks, and the outbreak rapidly subsided. The cases were of a most mild character, as, indeed, have been the majority of the cases I have seen during the past few years,

which leads me to hope that the virulence of the disease, as compared with former years, is much diminished.

Three cases of diphtheria and seven of scarlet fever were removed to the Isolation Hospital. One case of *erysipelas* and once case of *enteric fever* were notified to me. The latter case had no connection with the town, as the patient returned to her home from school with the disease already developed.

*Mumps* were epidemic in the town during the latter part of the year, and many adults were affected. The disease took a most unusual form in many of the cases, as, when the patients seemed apparently well, they were attacked with severe gastric pain, vomiting, and high temperature, which continued for a few days and then gradually subsided.

The need of better cottage accommodation was fully reported on in my last annual report, and a committee was formed to consider the matter, but I believe no definite result was arrived at.

The sewerage of the town is now completed, and we endeavour as much as possible to do away with all cesspits, and insist on connection with the sewer. Some tenants prefer converting their closets into earth closets, which, with proper attention, are excellent things, but as there is no system of scavenging for the same, constant supervision is required, or they get horribly neglected.

The supply and purity of the town water has been most satisfactory, and the analysis of the Clinical Research Association certifies the water to be "of excellent quality, being unusually free from organic impurities and very soft."

I have made monthly reports to you of the result of our inspection of the various parts of the town, and on any insanitary condition or outbreak of infectious disease coming to my knowledge, and have personally visited all cases of the latter notified to me. Four cases of overcrowding were reported, and one cottage as unfit for habitation, and one other has been put in proper repair on our complaint.

The bakehouses, slaughterhouses, and dairies have been regularly inspected, and great attention has been paid to the sanitary condition of the latter. A quantity of meat unfit for consumption was seized and destroyed by order of the magistrates.

Tables dealing with the mortality of the town and other matters are appended to this report. They differ much from those supplied in former years, and the information required is far in excess of any previous year, and entails a vast amount of extra work. To collect the birth and death-rates and other facts connected with same for the past ten years is no easy matter, as many of the earlier reports were destroyed, and you had to hunt up from various sources the information required, which, after a great deal of trouble, I have been able to obtain.

I am, Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen, yours faithfully,

FREDK. I. FLOWER,

Medical Officer of Health to the Council.

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